

# THE NATION AND ATHENÆUM

SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1930.

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# THE NATION

## AND ATHENÆUM

### LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

#### A BROADCAST DEBATE

**Points of View.** With an Introduction and Summing Up by G. LOWES DICKINSON. (Allen & Unwin. 4s. 6d.)

"POINTS of View" prints a series of broadcasts from Mr. Lowes Dickinson, Dean Inge, Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. J. B. S. Haldane, and Sir Oliver Lodge. Mr. Bernard Shaw also broadcast, but characteristically refused to toe the line and be printed with his colleagues, and his place has been filled by Sir Walford Davies. The B.B.C. is to be congratulated both on the series and on the prominence it gives to Mr. Dickinson, who opens and closes the debate, and writes a general introductory note. Mr. Dickinson has, of course, won an audience through his books, and he is particularly well known to readers of THE NATION, but he is not a familiar name to the general public, and something has here been done to repair the public loss. Last year, just after the series had been delivered, the present reviewer took a railway journey with an excited and intelligent young man, half clerk and half sailor, who waved copies of the LISTENER about and cried, "I've heard of all the others, but who's Low Dickins? He's far the best of the lot, he sets you start thinking for yourself." That has, of course, always been Mr. Dickinson's aim, from "The Meaning of Good" onwards, and it is the aim of the series generally, and those of us who believe in thought must thank the B.B.C. and wish it many years of freedom from commercialism. It has its faults. Its demure gentlemanliness is often trying, and it is menaced by that subtle evil, public school good form, which always ends by throttling originality. But at all events it is not tricking us into buying something. The speakers are not suddenly switched off so that somebody's patent poison may be dinned into our ears. This happens in other countries, and it would happen in Great Britain if proper control were removed.

Why do we believe in thought? All the speakers, except Sir Walford Davies, stress their belief in it. They desire to find out what the universe is like and to make deductions from the discovery. Not even Sir Oliver Lodge exalts intuition, not even the Dean of St. Paul's takes refuge in authority. We believe in thought, surely, for two distinct and perhaps incompatible reasons. In the first place it seems "up to us" to think; it is a noble and human activity, something that men ought to do. In the second place, we hope that by thinking we shall avert certain evils from ourselves and society, particularly the evil of war. "Men always want to fight when they ought to be trying to understand," is the way Mr. Dickinson puts it, and he weaves the two reasons for thinking into a single thread more closely, perhaps, than do his colleagues. He would weave in everything, love as well as thought; he feels that until human nature has expanded fully we cannot either be saved or safe, and views civilization as a pilgrimage towards a harmony which may never be realized, but it is our only proper goal.

Democracy, psychology, and biology are among the subjects touched upon in the debate; it is not possible to give a complete list of them in this brief notice, and still less possible to indicate the points of difference between the speakers. The addresses are not of equal value. Sir Walford Davies's is the least satisfactory; there is a sort of coy mysticism about him which does not wear well, and when he says that "the galactic universe is perhaps one stupendous Rondo of the Almighty," neither astronomy nor music seems to advance. Dean Inge makes, as always, some fine and acceptable remarks, but he seems dispirited, although he professes to be in better spirits, and he snubs his colleagues without enthusiasm. Mr. Haldane is interesting, and severely statistical as long as it is a question of comparative mortality in occupations; when he

comes to marriage he gives, rather charmingly, no statistics, but, because his own marriage has been happy, recommends the adventure to all and sundry. His talk suffers from desultoriness, and the same criticism might be passed on Sir Oliver Lodge's. Indeed, how should these talks be otherwise? one feels inclined to say. "Points of View" are lived, not narrated; one can broadcast views, but not a point of view. So one would suppose: and then Mr. Wells comes and proves one wrong; his talk, the best in the book, somehow manages to distil the knowledge and emotion of a lifetime into half an hour. He writes very simply, very sincerely, and all about himself, yet there is not a touch of egoism in his argument; he is a "fragment of a man" trying, through the microphone, to reach other fragments of men. It is clear that the medium was suited to Mr. Wells, and that he would not have been as happy on a lecture platform, and as one reads him one visualizes him sitting in the sound-proof studio, anxious and excited, with that queer skull-like membranous object hanging a foot from his mouth, and confiding to it his view of the human make up. He is the most vivid and stimulating of the contributors. But one's abiding memory will be of Mr. Dickinson. With Mr. Dickinson sympathy and tolerance are not catchwords or even pious aspirations. He possesses them naturally, and yet they do not enfeeble his own outlook or make him compromising or hazy. He really can enter into the views of others and interpret them without abandoning his own, and that is why he is so perfectly suited to preside over such a symposium as this.

E. M. FORSTER.

#### THE WAR, CONTINUED

**In the Hell of Verdun.** By ALFRED HEIN. Translated from the German by F. H. LYON. (Cassell. 7s. 6d.)

**Pillbox 17.** By KARL BRÖGER. Translated from the German by OAKLEY WILLIAMS. (Thornton Butterworth. 5s.)

**Behind the Barrage.** By FRANCIS A. WINDER. (Duckworth. 7s. 6d.)

**The Man with the X-Ray Eyes.** By FROIS FROISLAND. Translated from the Norwegian by NILS FLATEN. (Harpers. 7s. 6d.)

**The Cabaret Up the Line.** By ROLAND DORGELES. Translated from the French by BRIAN LUNN and ALAN DUNCAN. (The Bodley Head. 7s. 6d.)

**Toes Up.** By PAOLO MONELLI. Translated from the Italian by ORLO WILLIAMS. (Duckworth. 10s. 6d.)

**A Generation Missing.** By CARROLL CARSTAIRS. (Heinemann. 5s.)

**Copse 125.** By ERNST JUNGER. Translated from the German by BASIL CREIGHTON. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.)

**Satan the Waster.** By VERNON LEE. (The Bodley Head. 5s.)

THE appetite of the public for the war novel and war play still seems to remain unappeased. "All Quiet" and "Journey's End" were only the first clouds to gather on the horizon, and still the storm rages with unabated fury. Possibly these nine books from six countries, including one non-combatant, are by way of a breaking-up shower, though there is nothing about them to make one suppose so, and there seems in fact to be a general atmosphere of "damned be he that first cries 'Hold, enough!'"

A general impression of matter and manner from a group of such war books is one of variations on a theme, with too much of the theme and not enough variations. (Actually several of these are merely decorations, and one or two merely blemishes on a theme.) Of these authors only one or two have any belief in the beauty or intrinsic value of the theme itself. Inconsequence is an enemy that besets any mere war chronicler. Rest in billets, blighty wounds,



girls in cafés, even the armistice, make no real development, climax or end. One big bombardment creates no more tension than another, unless you happen to be in it, and a disembowelled man is no more harrowing to read about than one with his skull smashed in, unless you have got to know him well beforehand. So characters at the front must be created with "cold gradation and well balanced form" before a reader can be expected to care whether they get wire-entangled, court-martialled, or blown to glory.

Of the "true to life" novel there are three fairly representative examples in this batch. All three authors are agreed about the noise of heavy shelling, and two of them about the noise of machine-guns (with slight variations in spelling), the value of "comradeship," and the fact that you must not give a man a drink when he has a wound in the "abdomen." (These two are German: the third, an Englishman, would have called it a "belly" had he had occasion to refer to it.) Each of the three has a different predilection in ornamenting his theme. Alfred Hein, the author of "In the Hell of Verdun," writes:—

"We won't make the little boy blush"—and Pechtler, grinning, whispered in Wittke's ear how he meant to contract a certain contagious disease as soon as he got to France."

Francis A. Winder, in "Behind the Barrage," is less trying. He does not worry about blushes:—

"... and yet another slept with an undesirable lady on Woolwich Common (Shaen tumbled over them in the dark), and the man was sent to Hospital with consequent loss of pay—and only a few weeks before he had been an innocent boy."

It is all so *true*, like an American jazz-lyric. The occupants of "Pillbox 17," the third of these three books, had no time for amorous adventures. Karl Bröger, the author, who is described as "Germany's Labour poet," has written an amusingly self-important "Autobiographical Foreword for the English edition," but his novel is as naturalistic, as boring after thirty pages or so, and as free from character drawing as the other two. Whenever a character in the two German books begins to be interesting he is killed off either by shelling or sentimentality. Mr. Winder bears more grudges against the enemy than all these other authors put together, but when he writes about his grudges, or anything else, he does so with gusto.

"The Man with the X-Ray Eyes" consists of thirteen short stories by a war-correspondent on a Norwegian newspaper. Most of them are journalistic and materialistic, in the same line of descent as, but less subtly worked out and written than, the early short stories of H. G. Wells. There is no nery blather, as there is with most of the warrior-authors, but there is a good deal of the macabre and the unusual, some dots and "(Here a paragraph has been cut out by the censor.)" The translator has some queer mannerisms, including an overfondness for the word "gotten," and the book is luridly illustrated.

The Frenchman, Roland Dorgelès, has some entertaining stories to tell. The fourteen stories in "The Cabaret Up the Line" are unequal, but each one has a point. The author does not sentimentalize, he does not comment, and he has a subtle sense of fun.

An Italian representative in this international selection of war books is Paolo Monelli's "Toes Up"—"a chronicle of gay and doleful adventures of Alpini and Mules and Wine." It is fresher and more stimulating than the lifeless, chaotic nerviness of most war chronicling, and this is not only because the material is fresher. The diary form of the book is livened by a sensitive observation and a balanced judgment in the author.

Ernst Jünger and Vernon Lee are both in a sense "above the battle," though Herr Jünger only arrives there by dint of a considered philosophy wrought in him by bitter experiences of endurance and heroism. "War is not a material matter," he writes. "There are higher realities to which it is subject. When two civilized peoples confront one another, there is more in the scale than explosives and steel." He is almost unique among the authors here represented in realizing that a true sense of reality, or of any universal truth is not arrived at merely by meticulous description of the rare and strange occurrences of 1914-18. Vernon Lee's "Satan the Waster" is a "philosophical war

drama" in the form of a "Ballet of Nations" with prologue, epilogue, and notes. Mr. Bernard Shaw wrote four columns on it in *THE NATION* for September 18th, 1920, in the course of which he said: "The book, of first-rate workmanship from beginning to end, is far too thorough to leave the reviewer anything to say about it that is not better said in the book itself." So be it. Apart from Mr. Shaw, reviewers at that time either ignored or damned it, and it has now been republished, and flows in on the new tide of war books.

Mr. Osbert Sitwell, in his foreword to "A Generation Missing," points out that the author has "taken the war emotionally." So have many others. Mr. Carstairs came from America to serve in the British Army, and he soon got in the thick of it. After a promising "Prologue," the writing drifts into the first person, and in spite of a few fine passages it creates no vivid pictures, and is concentrated too often on unrepresentative or uninteresting facts.

J. P.

## PLAYS

**That Worthless Fellow Platonov.** By ANTON CHEKHOV. Translated by JOHN COUNNOS. (Dent. 6s.)

**This Way to Paradise.** By CAMPBELL DIXON. (Chatto & Windus. 3s. 6d.)

**Two Plays.** By ARTHUR PINERO. (Heinemann. 6s.)

**Who Will Kiss Cinderella?** By J. B. MACCARTHY. (Roberts. 3s. 6d.)

**The New Hangman.** By LAURENCE HOUSMAN. (Putnam. Limited edition, 10s. 6d.; cloth, 2s. 6d.; paper, 1s.)

THE new Chekhov play translated by Mr. Cournos introduces us to a Chekhovian community in which Platonov is singled out as worthless; but Platonov's worthlessness is chiefly distinguishable from the worthlessness of his twelve or fourteen male acquaintances by its being self-accusing and self-pitying. True, Platonov is an idler, a drunkard, and an adulterer, while the remainder limit themselves, in the play, to idleness and drunkenness. But one must not set too much store by this negative virtue in a set of ultra-bores. Their lack even of self-respecting or angry beasthood must have been a more potent factor in the demoralization of their womenfolk than any positive wantonness in Platonov. It is not till the end of the play that the reader is able to decide whether Platonov is intended to be a clever villain or a clever fool. This uncertainty, moreover, is annoyingly attended by a certainty in the reader's mind that his (the reader's) perplexity is less to be attributed to the subtlety of the character than to a weakness in the art of the dramatist. But the play is an early one of Chekhov—perhaps his first—and this kind of weakness in characterization is common with inexperienced dramatists. Chekhov soon learned to give dramatic poise to subtler Platonovs. The four women who fall for the worthless fellow are ordinary types. Anna Petrovna is just an ordinary clever widow; Sofya Egorovna is just an average romantic wife; Grekova is only an adventurous flapper, not of herself decided either to virtue or vice; Alexandra Ivanovna is a simple, childishly loyal woman, who, thank God! prevents any further spread of the absurd mess by shooting her worthless husband, Platonov. In the circumstances, even supposing them to be real—even supposing that in a circle of twelve or fourteen males there should not happen to be one man—one may accept that a number of women would become infatuated with "a Don Juan and a pitiful coward," less a Don Juan and more a self-pitying coward; but one cannot be expected to be deeply interested. If one is interested in the play—and that one certainly is—it is because it is Chekhov's, and because, enormities aside, Mr. Cournos has given us a readable translation.

"This Way to Paradise" is a dramatization by Mr. Campbell Dixon of Mr. Aldous Huxley's "Point Counter Point." Mr. Huxley himself is satisfied with the result—a strange one—like the last intellectualist offspring of Wilde and Flecker, the Flecker of "Don Juan." Here in a new brilliant "Humbug Hunt" are people who can still be "bourgeois," bored and bodiless, ready to make the discovery that "alcohol is ageing," whilst a young man stages his way to paradise through "brandy, brothels, and blood."

The main idea of "Dr. Harmer's Holidays" was suggested to Sir Arthur Pinero by a trial at the Old Bailey in 1892, in which three men were charged with the murder, in squalid circumstances, of a young doctor, who, up to the events which led to his death, had borne an irreproachable character. The play, which the author calls "a contrast," is made up of nine scenes vividly imagined, in which the characters of Lilian Dipple, Florence Portch, Gorham and his friends, have a genuine tragic quality. "Child Man" is a "sedate farce" in three acts. Sir Arthur claims, moreover, that none of the characters does anything wholly inconceivable. The first and third acts, which are full of fun, make good the claim; but while the middle act, well-produced, might be very funny indeed, it hardly sustains the title "sedate."

Mr. MacCarthy's romantic comedy has no very new theme, but it is full of happy nonsense and perfectly vital flapper talk. We breathe a heartfelt sigh of relief as each character in turn steps back from the verge of tragedy into the hoped-for land.

In Mr. Housman's one-act play a new hangman having accepted his appointment "without any intention of carrying out the duties," a situation arises in which the warders, governor, and chaplain decline to give effect themselves to the law.

LYLE DONAGHY.

### SPECIALIZED LIVES

**Fishing Boats and Fisher Folk on the East Coast of Scotland.**

By PETER F. ANSON. (Dent. 12s. 6d.)

**Welsh Folklore and Folk Custom.** By T. GWYNN JONES. (Methuen. 7s. 6d.)

**The Red Hills.** By CORNELIUS WEYGANDT. (Humphrey Milford; Oxford University Press. 17s.)

THE lives of simple folk, which seem to attract us by contrast, are in reality no less specialized and complex than our own. Mankind has an instinct against simplicity. We complicate our lives by a civilization of apparatus; yet none of us struggle beneath so elaborate a system of taboos as the old fishermen in Mr. Anson's book, and our marriages are casual affairs compared to those of certain primitive folk in Wales. The student who turns to folklore in a vague nostalgia for unspoiled beginnings is going to be disappointed. He will be happier with curios of Cornish serpentine and a book of Hebridean songs. What he may gain, apart from its historical interest, is a fresh approach to problems which have become encumbered with tradition, and a chance to measure his own deliberate specializing against one which more resembles an animal's self-adaptation to its environment.

For this, Mr. Anson's book is the perfect manual. Any one who loves the sea or fishermen or Scotland will find it irresistibly interesting. Loving all three, I can hardly be temperate in its praises. The least satisfactory part (to me) is the illustrations. Mr. Anson's line serves admirably for boats and houses, less well for hills and rocks and water. Still, there is only one Jack Yeats, and he set the standard unfairly high. In his text Mr. Anson sets down everything, from methods of fishing, customs, superstitions, and beliefs, to the surnames commonest in every port. His book is a monument of industry and loving care: it could hardly have been done better.

Professor Gwynn Jones explains in his preface that attempts at comparative treatment and explanation are outside the scope of his book. We can only wish that his book had been bigger. The first chapter is a brilliant condensation of difficult material, and the arrangement of the whole book practical and clear. He is never dull: a pleasant undercurrent runs beneath his business-like manner. On the decline of old Welsh courtesy he writes:—

"With the coming of the popular movements in religion, there was a tendency to regard manners as indications of pride and vanity, and a gruffness, supposed to be a sign of honesty, was cultivated by many."

The poet Dafydd ap Gwilym describes a maiden whom he loves as his beautiful soul, and himself as the image of that soul, the other-self. A farmer once walked twenty-two

miles to save twopence. "Many nuts, many nits," is a weather proverb. But the book is no mere collection of anecdotes. Professor Gwynn Jones examines the diversity of races comprehended in the one term "Welsh," the variations in the stock legends, and the influence of locality on folk-tale. The chapter upon Marriage is perhaps the most interesting, with that upon Birth and Death a close second.

Those who know Professor Weygandt as the historian of "Irish Plays and Playwrights" and the urbane raconteur of "Tuesdays at Ten," will be interested in his latest book, an account of the Pennsylvania Dutch. His judgments are sometimes on the easy side; but enthusiasm is a welcome quality in a professor, and there is a hospitality about his pages which somehow includes the reader:—

"Roused from bed by the flowers' scent and by thought of the delicate enamelling on the bowl, I have sought them out, flashlight in hand, and have rejoiced over them, in the small hours of the night."

This sentence gives the key of enjoyment in which the book is written.

L. A. G. STRONG.

### PERDITA'S STORY

**Memoirs of the late Mrs. Robinson.** Written by Herself. New Edition, with an Introduction, and two Portraits. (Cobden-Sanderson. 7s. 6d.)

WHY is it that the plucky and pathetic "Perdita" Robinson has so often succeeded in arousing a faint derision, if not downright laughter? She and her fellow-poetess Hannah Cowley (who, among their many pseudonyms, called themselves "Laura-Maria" and "Anna-Matilda") are linked together in "Rejected Addresses" as the Laura-Matilda of the sentimental verses in that Paradise of Parodies; and the anonymous, but admittedly "modern and masculine" editor of this latest edition of the "Memoirs," evidently hesitates over presenting his subject as worthy to share "the Sapphic throne, even with a Smith or a Seward." He need have no such diffidence. Perdita holds her own. Her Memoirs are eminently readable; and one has only to compare the vivacious pages of her unfinished work with the dull and dutiful conclusion written after her death by her daughter, to realize that the charming Perdita certainly knew how to write. Perhaps she loses sympathy because she was too willing to sympathize with herself. She was certainly absurdly theatrical, driving about in that ridiculous carriage, with its basket of flowers painted to look like a coronet upon the panel; or, in her "nightgown of pale blue lustring, with a chip hat, trimmed with ribands of the same colour," winning "a fatal victory" at Greenwich. But that very theatricality carries her book along.

We are usually told to take these Memoirs with a grain of salt, but they are fairly trustworthy. The facts are mostly reliable, and the colouring given to them, so unflinchingly to the advantage of the narrator, adds to their truth-value. It shows what Perdita liked to imagine of herself, and so, unconsciously, reveals her character. An Autobiography often has this quality. It displays the writer in the nude, just when he fancies he has dressed himself up most beguilingly.

Still, Perdita was not unique in admiring herself. When the Prince of Wales fell for her as she was playing in "The Winter's Tale," she must have been an exquisite creature, with an innocent charm which she never wholly lost. Garrick and Sheridan really thought her a good actress; and the record in this book of the parts she played in one winter must astonish the players of the present day—twenty-two leading parts, including nine Shakespearian heroines. Coleridge greatly admired her poetry (although the present editor thinks he must have been in love with her to do so), and she was certainly one of the best-sellers of her day.

This unfinished book partly explains why. Written as it is in the sentimental language used in her set, she yet makes her people live. How well she describes Meribah Lorrington, the astonishing schoolmistress from whom she avers that she learnt all she ever knew! This drunken creature, who kept her pupil up half the night to listen to her maudlin volubility, was not only a Bluestocking, but was obviously a born teacher. She was "mistress of the



Latin, French, and Italian languages . . . a perfect arithmetician and astronomer, and possessed the art of painting on silk to a degree of exquisite perfection." There is a touch of real tragedy in the simple way in which Perdita tells of her final meeting with this woman. With a very few touches, she shows us her father, the dashing sea-captain who lost a fortune and found a mistress in Canada, and yet retained enough of the family pride to forbid his wife to stave off starvation by keeping a school, and who, as he returned to the arms of his mistress, declared that if "dishonour fell upon his daughter," he would "annihilate" his wife!

With what zest Perdita compares her own appearance on her arrival at Mr. Harris's house, in a "dark claret-coloured riding habit, with a white beaver hat and feathers," with that of her husband's sister, "Gothic in her appearance, and stiff in her deportment. She was of low stature, and clumsy, with a countenance peculiarly formed for the expression of sarcastic vulgarity—a short, snub nose, turned up at the point, a head thrown back with an air of hauteur; a gaudy-coloured chintz gown, a thrice-bordered cap, with a profusion of ribbons, and a countenance somewhat more ruddy than was consistent with even pure health." Beside this figure, she sets Mr. Harris, on his "small Welch pony," in "a brown fustian coat, a scarlet waistcoat edged with narrow gold, a pair of woollen spatter-dashes, and a gold laced hat." The book abounds in such sketches.

The editor might have gone further to amuse himself and us. Rather more about Perdita's surroundings would have been welcome—something of her connection with the Della Cruscans, that fantastic school of Poetasters who wrote each other poetical letters in the ORACLE and the WORLD. She lived surrounded by amusing people. But after introducing her with almost the brevity of a Wireless Announcer, he has left Perdita to stand alone. Perhaps he was right. She can.

The volume is pleasant to hold, and very agreeable to the eye.

EDITH OLIVIER.

### HYMNING HARRY CAREY

**The Poems of Henry Carey.** Edited by F. T. Wood. (Scholartis Press. 10s. 6d.)

TIME has dealt justly but severely with "hymning Harry Carey's" slender contribution to English letters. The mild success which his burlesque plays, his songs, and occasional pieces achieved whilst he lived did not save him from penury and neglect, and finally a tragic suicide; neither did it establish, after his death, the reputation he had struggled to obtain. He is remembered, if at all, by "Sally in Our Alley," "Nabby-Pamby," and as the possible author of the National Anthem. Besides these short pieces, "Chrononhotonthologos," "the most Tragical Tragedy that ever was Tragediz'd by any Company of Tragedians," and his fantastic parody, "The Dragon of Wantley," are still worth reading and are still able to rouse a laugh. Of the rest of his work, it cannot be said that it deserves more comment than he himself bestowed on the tragedies he burlesqued, as:—

"Serenely dull, elaborately low."

What is interesting about Carey, at any rate to a student of the early eighteenth century, is his humble position in the company of the Great Augustans. He is stamped with all the characteristics of the age; its preference for the city and the coffee-house to the fields; its distant admiration for Nature and her irregular beauties; its nationalism; its love of satire and parody, and all the elaborate devices for disguising a heart that never would stay for very long in the right place. It was better then to be a minor poet—and Carey was nothing else—than not to be one at all, and Carey just manages to squeeze into that formal group of great and lesser Augustans, at the feet of Gay and Prior—to win an occasional approving glance from Addison and Pope.

Many living Careys would envy the well-printed collection of his poems which Mr. Frederick Wood has edited for the Scholartis Press, though all but a few benevolent critics

would throw up their jobs if every poetaster were honoured in the same way. For, when all is said and done, and when one has read page after page of praise and remonstrance to the *fair charmer* and the *cruel fair*, there remain very few poems (e.g., "Sally in Our Alley," and one or two parodies and drinking-songs), which can be read with any pleasure. Mr. Wood, as one would expect from the editor of a minor poet, introduces his edition with an enthusiasm which he must not expect his readers to share. In claiming Carey as a nature poet, he antedates the Romantic Revival so far as to turn it into a permanent aspiration; while such a statement as "Little of Carey's poetry is didactic. Pre-eminently lyrical in tone, it possesses a charm of melody quite exceptional for Augustan times: the beauty is in the extreme felicity of expression, and the smooth felicity of metre," is too vague to be of any value as criticism; and in any case Mr. Wood contradicts himself a few pages later when he states that the object of Carey's poetry was "avowedly a moral one . . . to extol the virtuous life." Such questions, however, can best be decided by the reader himself, if he will turn to the poems themselves, and read them in the careful text that Mr. Wood has prepared.

J. H.

### HISTORY AND THE CARPENTER

**Old English Furniture for the Small Collector.** By J. P. BLAKE and A. E. REVEIRS-HOPKINS. (Batsford. 12s. 6d.)

It is difficult to analyze the fever for collecting: the germ of acquisitiveness remains unfilterable. That collectors are born, not made, is a frequent boast; some of them seem dowered with a sense akin to water-diviners, and will, as if under the control of a witch-hazel rod, find treasure in unlikely places. "Old English Furniture" is a book primarily intended for the small collector, though others would find it interesting for the light it throws on past times. The authors apparently know the difficulties that beset the path of the beginner, and have given of their store of knowledge without stint. With a passing reference to Gothic and Tudor they concentrate on furniture of the seventeenth century down to and including Early Victorian times. The book is profusely illustrated in so admirable a manner that it should prevent anyone from confusing the work of the master-craftsmen, such as the great Thomas Chippendale, Heppelwhite, or Sheraton. The reader is warned that it is "a matter of research and also for conjecture to determine how far Chippendale was in fact a dominating factor in the furniture of his time, or rather whether he was a sort of generic term (like Gothic architecture)." It is worthy of note, that at the date of his fire in 1755, he had but one factory, and employed but twenty-two workmen. Therefore it is not possible that the tens of thousands of "Chippendale" ascribed to him were made even under his supervision.

Lovers of old furniture are directed by our authors to a little known London museum, where they can wander from room to room among an ever-changing loan collection dating from Tudor to Georgian times. Besides the illustrations of types of furniture, many reproductions are given of contemporary pictures of interiors, which have a special value to the student, for they allow him to see old furniture in its original setting. It is interesting to note how the costumes and coiffures of the figures in J. Goldar's engraving of a painting by Pugh, dated 1771, show the same over-elaboration of detail and flamboyant designs as the furniture and fittings of the period. It would be difficult to decide whether the furniture or dress led the way, though much that is extravagant and unnatural in our present-day modes, is, I believe, distinctly traceable to the influence of Epstein's Venus on the feeble-minded: they caught at the form and lost the spirit. Fortunately, there are to-day designers of furniture who have, with those of the great age of oak, a respect for the dignity of the material worked upon. It is reassuring to see with what care wood is chosen for the beauty of its grain, colour or markings. This betokens a new and healthy era. The product of every age should be as individual as the age itself.

K. C. T.

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## THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

**The Russian Theatre.** By R. FULOP-MILLER and JOSEPH GREGOR.  
Translated by PAUL ENGLAND. (Harrap. £5 5s.)

THIS book begins with a hundred pages of sensible letter-press, but the point of it is in the most excellent illustrations, four hundred of them, many in colour. A section of the illustrations is given to the dancers, mostly of the Diaghileff ballet, some beautiful ones of Nijinsky; but this seems a little apart from the main purpose of the book, which is a chronicle of the stage *décor* of Russia from the orthodox Imperial Theatre of thirty years ago to the constructivist and "dynamic" contraptions of Bolshevik Moscow, which Diaghileff showed to London in the "Pas d'Acier."

The authors insert some pictures of mediæval and traditional Russia to show the influences at work. This may be. But what strikes me is the experimental and restless spirit which has now passed through every sort of phase in the last twenty years—Golovin, Benois, Roerich, Bakst, and Larionoff, Mayerhold and Stanislavsky, and finally Vachtangov, Tairoff, Yakouloff, and Eisenstein—and the influence all this has had, via Berlin and Paris, on the rest of Europe. England has never allowed us to see what Gordon Craig is worth. The ideas which have been put into practice have been coming out of Russia, where the art of the theatre has never been commercialized and is taken seriously.

When I look through the illustrations of these pages and see in a procession all that one has seen on the boards of the theatre, I chiefly feel how good and "genialen" and satisfactory each of these artists has been in himself, and how *bad* he has been as soon as he became an influence. How much harm Bakst has done! But Bakst was a great artist of the theatre, particularly for costumes, though I like the familiar scenes of the "Sleeping Princess" and "Scheherazade." Looking back, I think Benois has been the most *solid*, the least dangerous as an influence; though in his case, too, the famous setting of "Petrouchka," charming and perfectly suitable and suggestive of something beyond, has led on to the Chauves Souris in their later stages, and a great many other artistic mediocrities.

So this book shows what one might have known without it—that we need talents, not influences. But it is an important book for theatrical people, and suggests a great deal which is useful to the practical imagination.

LYDIA LOPOKOVA.

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**Studies in Eighteenth-Century Diplomacy.** By SIR RICHARD LODGE. (Murray. 12s.)

**Parme dans la politique française du 18<sup>e</sup> Siècle.** By BÉDARIDA. (Felix Alcan. 25 frs.)

ONE's first emotion on finishing Sir Richard Lodge's truly masterly work is amazement at the strange juggernauts beneath which men are willing to be crushed. Sir Richard has devoted years to unravelling the knots of eighteenth-century diplomacy, and may be said to take no interest in anything else. But is this quite true? Does not Sir Richard Lodge also talk in parables? The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which is the dingy haven of his painful pilgrimage, was the perfection of the inconclusive peace. There may be a pitying glance here at those amateurs who thought it would have been possible to make an inconclusive peace with Germany. For, Sir Richard holds, a war is due to diseases in the body politic, and an inconclusive peace leaves those diseases unremedied. This is true; so also is another of Sir Richard's epigrams, "The triumphs of diplomacy are proverbially short-lived, and its results rarely correspond with its intentions." So where are you?

If the reader sticks to Sir Richard, he will eventually get fascinated. The war of the Austrian Succession really seemed to be about nothing, and diplomacy to be an end in itself. It was the great weakness of Sir Robert Walpole that he embarked on a war that was to be his undoing. His successor Carteret for a year dominated Europe with wild schemes for world-conquest, till the management of affairs

fell into the hands of Newcastle, who frankly treated the war as a by-election. In a way he was right to do so. As M. Bédarida says in his elegant book on eighteenth-century Parma, Europe was at war for twenty years, because Louis XV. had promised his son-in-law a country estate in North Italy and did not like to break his word.

The result of all this absurdity, of worshipping forms and methods of government as an end in itself, is at first to fray the nerves of the reader beyond endurance. The succession of conferences and of ministers, of plots, and counter-plots is as confusing as it is trifling and wasteful. Gradually, however, the human interest prevails. The Duke of Newcastle cannot help being amusing. Sandwich at Breda is the perfect young man in a hurry. D'Argenson is an unexpected portent, "the first example of the professor in politics." Unaffected by any principles of honour and decency, the house of Savoy munches another small leaf of the Italian artichoke. Grotesque priests and preposterous *émigrés* flit from one capital to another, and above the tumult we hear the sardonic laugh of Lord Chesterfield, the one definitely first-class figure to be mixed up in this tragicomic imbroglio. Really to an historically minded person it eventually stops mattering what human beings are doing, as long as they are doing something or even preventing something being done. They cannot help displaying their character in its first nakedness.

A reading of M. Bédarida's book will probably lead many people to think that we were on the unattractive side in the Austrian war. The war of the Austrian Succession was an expensive method of installing a Spanish Bourbon in the Palace of Parma, even though this palace is one of the most charming buildings in Italy. By the time the Seven-Years' War was over, even Louis XV. saw that he had made a mistake. Yet there is something to be said for the Europe of the Family Compact, with philosophical Prime Ministers hard at work suppressing the Jesuits and reforming the taxes in Paris, Madrid, Parma, Modena, and Naples. It was too late in the day, we must admit. And the Austrians succeeded in undoing a good deal of it. But it was a pleasant, happy, and variegated spectacle while it lasted. M. Bédarida's book reads like a rose-water introduction to "La Chartreuse de Parme."

FRANCIS BIRRELL.

## THE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD

**London's Old Latin Quarter.** By E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR.  
Illustrated. (Cape. 15s.)

THIS book ought to have been called simply "The History of Tottenham Court Road." Although Bloomsbury shares with Chelsea the privilege of being London's "Latin Quarter"—if English artists must, like English dressmakers, look to Paris for their denominations—Mr. Chancellor tells us very little about Bloomsbury as a "Latin Quarter," either new or old. A "Latin Quarter," in this loose significance, consists surely of a community of artists, who give to the place some personality other than that given to it by the architect. But Mr. Chancellor is not concerned with a community of artists. It is true he may protest that a number of writers, sculptors and painters once lived among the changing scenes of the Tottenham Court Road area. The name and the habitat of each of them is duly recorded, but, unless the reader is already acquainted with them, they never become very much more than names. The breath of life is not in them. There are no personalities in Mr. Chancellor's book, and for this reason it is disappointing.

As compensation, however, Mr. Chancellor does not set out to bring to our notice only the artistic aspect of the neighbourhood; there are also the commercial and the architectural. A good deal of attention is given especially to commerce, and there is some satisfaction in this, because the results of commercial enterprise in the Tottenham Court Road are to this day very evident. Information is worth having about this, and also with regard to the architecture. But on the whole it is surprising what a little real information this book manages to give, and what it does say is often said more than once. There is no very great advantage in being told that "one of the most architecturally



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interesting mansions in the Square (*i.e.*, Bedford Square) is No. 1," any more than it is helpful to hear that "Pinkerton, a once well-known but, I fear, nearly forgotten antiquary," once resided at No. 120, Tottenham Court Road. Surely the plain statement is not enough. We can, of course, look with renewed interest at No. 1, Bedford Square, but we cannot look any more at Pinkerton the antiquary, and Mr. Chancellor gives us no eyes to see with.

The architectural development of Bloomsbury is worth being given in some detail, and Mr. Chancellor's book could well give this without becoming too specialistic. At present the value of the book remains in the simple account of the various stages through which Tottenham Court Road passed in its painful transition from green fields to what it is to-day. Now is the time for such a record as this, because Tottenham Court Road, like so much of London, is going through a process of fixation. Its vicissitudes will soon be at an end, if not altogether for the best. In the old days, of which Mr. Chancellor writes, when the itch to change the face of London came upon a builder there was nothing more than a brick wall or two to be demolished, and the field was then clear for "improvements." But the foreseeing method of the modern builder forestalls this. When the good people of the future are anxious to add a new page to Mr. Chancellor's history of Tottenham Court Road, they will find it no easy task to knock down, say, Messrs. Maples' new building, however great is their desire to do so.

JAMES THORNTON.

### THREE MYSTICS

**Selected Works of Richard Rolle, Hermit.** Transcribed with an Introduction by G. C. HESELTINE. (Longmans. 8s. 6d.)

**De Electionaire Gratiae et Quaestiones Theosophicae.** By JACOB BÖHME. Translated from the German by JOHN ROLLESTON EARLE. (Constable. 10s. 6d.)

**The Nature of Angels.** By ALEXANDER WHYTE, LL.D. (Hodder & Stoughton. 7s. 6d.)

THESE devotional writings, mediæval and modern, were intended by their respective authors to be direct aids to "holy living and dying." But theological fashions are short-lived, and the main interest of these three volumes is now historic. Rolle, who was born of poor Yorkshire parents in 1300, has greater claims to fame than are commonly recognized. His reputation has been overshadowed by that of Wyclif, for whom in various directions—most notably by his translation of the Psalter and the Canticles—he paved the way. Mr. Heseltine suggests that Rolle owes his eclipse to the modesty which he possessed and which Wyclif, at any rate in his earlier years, lacked. A fine humility certainly pervades the writings of Rolle which are here reprinted, though, like all true humility, it is yoked with courage and independence. Rolle was sufficiently a child of his own age to seek sanctity in the cloister; but it was always his own cloister that he sought. He was too original a thinker to adapt himself to any one religious order, and, while he embraced it for the major part of his life, he recognized the dangers and limitations of hermitage. A sweet reasonableness characterizes his commentaries, as when he argues that too severe mortification of the flesh defeats its own end. In his quaint parable of "The Bee" he remarks that, while "she keeps her wings clear and bright," the bee takes earth in her feet when she flies, "that she be not lightly carried up in a puff of wind." Rolle's style, with its lyrical interludes, is often as charming as his spirit, and Mr. Heseltine makes out a plausible case for him as being the true father of English prose.

Jacob Böhme was born, near Seidenberg, in 1575, and for some years followed the cobbler's trade. An inherited mystical tendency was fostered by ill health, and shoe-making was eventually abandoned for religious speculation. In the two treatises here presented Böhme sought to find metaphysical logic for a theosophical conception of God as the immanent Good in all things. His quest for a spiritual as distinct from an institutional religion brought him into conflict alike with Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformers. He was regarded as a dangerous heretic, and after his death his followers were banished to Holland.

His ideas were often extravagant, and his consistently argumentative style does not make easy reading. But the book is interesting as the reflection of a theology which was in the main—particularly in its attempt to harmonize religion and science—ahead of its time.

Into our third volume Mrs. Whyte has collected eight hitherto unpublished addresses by her late husband, who during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century was among the greatest of Scottish divines. Whyte was an "advanced" theologian to his own generation and wielded much influence. But we fear that Mrs. Whyte will be disappointed in her hope of winning the interest of the young people of to-day: the emphasis in religion has changed too completely. Angels and the Virgin Birth are no longer taken for granted, as Whyte naturally took them; and consequently the eloquent lessons drawn from them must fail of their effect. This, however, is not to say that we have necessarily grown wiser. We are merely looking at things from a different angle, and our own half-glimpse of truth is no more permanent than that of yesterday. We, like our predecessors, shall pass. The One will still remain.

GILBERT THOMAS.

### BOOKS IN BRIEF

**The British Edda.** By PROFESSOR WADDELL. (Chapman & Hall. 21s.)

Professor Waddell is well known for his researches into that Sumerian civilization which he claims was not only the earliest of all civilizations, but was of a fundamentally Aryan type, preceding the Semitic or the Negroid civilizations of Egypt or Assyria. This is a revolutionary theory, but he brings to its support an imposing mass of evidence, based partly on the engraved Sumerian seals and Hittite rock sculptures, but even more on etymology. Now, in his latest book, "The British Edda," he claims to have established the fact that this ancient epic, written in a language akin to what he calls Old British, Anglo-Saxon, and East Gothic, and preserved in Iceland, in a MS. of the twelfth century, is no less than a history of the beginnings of civilization, when a Sumerian king conquered the savage, devil-worshipping peoples from the Aegean to the mountains of Kurdistan, and imposed on them an ordered government, agriculture, marriage, and his own monotheistic sun-worship. This king he identifies with the "Thor" of the Edda and our own King Ar-Thur of legend, and once again, as in "The Phœnician Origins of Britain," he declares that we were colonized by a Sumerian civilization, and that our language, our legends, and our stone monuments keep the record of a civilization five thousand years old. It is a fascinating notion, and it is not the fault of Professor Waddell that to the average reader it smacks somewhat of a fairy-tale to find Arthur's Seat not only above Edinburgh, but on the rocks of Cappadocia, and the Icelandic Edda, written in mixed Runic characters, illustrated by pictures on Sumerian seals from Asia Minor; but the author's amazing knowledge of ancient languages and literatures compels respect for any theory he may put forward. His translation of the Edda will stand as the classic rendering of the text, and his notes and introduction have the delightful quality of communicating to the reader an enthusiasm in the hunt for "hidden clues" as great as in any detective story.

**Jahangir and the Jesuits.** By F. GUERREIRO. Translated by C. H. PAYNE. (Routledge. 12s. 6d.)

The Jesuits have so frequently been made the villains of Elizabethan romance that it is well to read of the good work which they were doing at the other end of the world. "Jahangir and the Jesuits" is the latest volume in that adventurous and scholarly series, "The Broadway Travellers." Jahangir, the King, dallied with the idea of conversion because there was no law in the Christian faith to discourage his love of pictures. He would also amuse himself by pitting the dialectical skill of the Jesuit fathers against that of his Mohammedan "mullas," and would laugh at the discomfiture of the latter. Another part of the book tells of the adventures of one, appropriately named Benedict Goes, who set out on a pilgrimage to discover far Cathay. The book is full of splendour and strange scenes, being a translation from Guerreiro, who was himself one of the fathers.

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